

**KEY FACTS ABOUT HIV/AIDS IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

**February 2006**

**FACTS AND FIGURES**

**Global / Eurasia:**

- Today, there are 40 million people living with HIV in the world. Since the epidemic began more than 20 years ago, an estimated 25 million people have died from HIV/AIDS.<sup>1</sup>
- Whereas sexual contact is the most common method of HIV transmission in the world; unsafe injection of illicit drugs remains the main driver of the epidemic in the CIS and Eastern European countries. Sexual transmission is, however, the fastest-growing cause of new infection in the region.
- According to UNAIDS and the World Health Organization, effective prevention and public education could avert as many as two-thirds of the 45 million new HIV infections projected to occur globally over the next decade.
- UNAIDS estimates that as many as 2/3 of all people living with HIV worldwide do not know they are infected.

**Russian Federation:**

- The first case of HIV was registered in 1987. By the late-1990s, Russia was home to one of the world's fastest-growing rates of new infection.<sup>2</sup>
- Russia has more people living with HIV/AIDS than any other country in Europe. Nearly 70% of all cases of HIV infection in Eastern Europe and Central Asia are in Russia.

- According to official data as of December 31, 2005, there are 333,332 registered cases of HIV infection in Russia, although some Russian and international experts estimate that between 800,000 and 1.5 million Russians may be living with HIV, representing between 1-2% of the country's adult population. This gap suggests that about 2/3 people living with HIV may not know about their status.
- By the end of 2005, there had been 8,157 reported deaths of HIV-positive people in Russia since the start of epidemiological monitoring.
- HIV/AIDS infection is now registered in all regions of the Russian Federation. Regions with disproportionately higher rates of infection include: Moscow; St. Petersburg; Sverdlovsk, Irkutsk and Samara regions.<sup>3</sup>
- Russia harbors one of the world's youngest HIV epidemics. Nearly 80% of all Russians living with HIV/AIDS are under age 30.
- Injection drug users remain the primary community at-risk, although the HIV epidemic is increasingly shifting beyond high-risk groups into the general population. Whereas sexual transmission accounted for just 6% of all registered cases of HIV transmission in 2001, by 2004 nearly 27% of all new cases of HIV infection were attributed to unsafe sexual contact.
- Although most cases of HIV infection are registered among men, women are increasingly vulnerable to infection. In some regions, 34-50% of new cases are attributed to women. Among young people aged 15-20, the proportion of new cases registered among women surpassed men for the first time in 2003.
- The number of children born to HIV-positive mothers and abandoned after birth is growing rapidly. By mid-2005, more than 1,000 of the 13,000 children born to HIV-positive mothers in Russia were abandoned.

**RUSSIAN ATTITUDES ABOUT HIV/AIDS<sup>4</sup>**

- 84% of Russians think HIV/AIDS is a "big problem".
- Seven in ten Russians would welcome additional efforts by the government to fight HIV/AIDS.
- Nearly 100% of Russians believe the government should provide information about HIV/AIDS to every adult and youth.
- Only 3% of Russians know someone living with HIV/AIDS (that is, someone who is aware of his/her positive status). 60% view people living with HIV with caution.
- Four in ten Russians believe they are not at risk of HIV/AIDS.

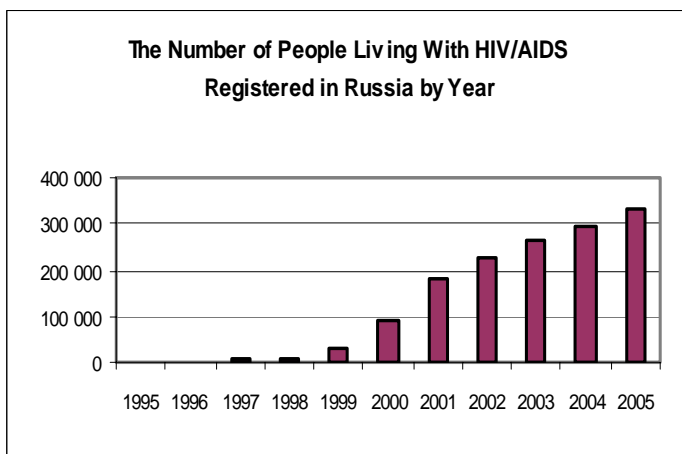


Figure 1. Russia's Growing HIV/AIDS Epidemic During the Last Decade (Source: Russian Federal AIDS Center, 2006)

## LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF HIV/AIDS

### Demographics:

- Some projections warn that by 2050, the country's population could decline by over 30%. The likely impact of HIV/AIDS is not factored into these projections.
- The growing burden of HIV/AIDS, which disproportionately affects young Russians of reproductive age, may hasten the rapid population decline. The full force of these consequences may not become apparent for decades until premature adult morbidity and mortality due to HIV/AIDS take hold.

### Economics:

- HIV will exert a negative impact on the size and health of the labor force. The HIV epidemic is likely to exert a strong negative impact on productivity.
- According to the World Bank, if current HIV transmission trends persist, the epidemic could result in a 4% fall in Russia's GDP growth by 2010; by 2020, the loss of GDP growth exceed 10%.<sup>5</sup>
- HIV could hurt Russia's prospects for economic growth by diverting important economic resources to fund treatment and care for the sick.
- Minor reductions in productivity and rates of growth as a result of HIV may reduce the ability of Russia's economy to compete other industrialized nations.

## RECENT & NEW HIV/AIDS INITIATIVES

- In September 2005, Russian President Vladimir Putin promised to allocate approximately \$105 million to fight HIV/AIDS in 2006. As a consequence, prevention programs will be strengthened and as many as 20,000 HIV-positive Russians will gain access to needed therapy.
- President Putin announced that public health would become one of four priority projects for 2006-2007. Within this framework, the Ministry of Health and Social Care will place added emphasis on HIV/AIDS.
- In early 2006, the State Council of the Russian Federation will convene to outline its strategy to fight HIV/AIDS. The event will mark the first time in Russia's history that HIV/AIDS has received such high-level attention.
- HIV/AIDS will be discussed within the framework of the fight against infectious diseases at the Summit of G8 in St. Petersburg in 2006.
- In December 2005 the Tripartite Commission (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Federation of Independent Trade Unions and Coordination Council of Unions of the Russian Employers) signed the Declaration of National Consent on AIDS, which emphasizes the importance of observance of international principles of HIV prevention, support and non-discrimination of people living with HIV at workplaces.

## BASIC INFORMATION ON HIV/AIDS

- Russia has an enormous opportunity to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS by expanding and improving prevention and treatment programs.
- HIV/AIDS is a problem that affects everyone. No one is immune from HIV infection, yet we all have the ability to prevent infection.
- The transmission of HIV can be prevented by people making informed decisions about their health and sexual behavior.
- There is no cure or vaccine for HIV/AIDS. Treatment exists that can allow many people living with HIV/AIDS to live healthy and full lives. According to Russian legislation, treatment for HIV/AIDS should be free and accessible to all persons in need.
- HIV is not transferred through everyday contact. HIV can only be spread:
  - Through contact of blood, sperm, or vaginal secretions of an HIV-positive individual with the blood of an HIV-negative individual, directly or through a mucus membrane;
  - From a mother to child: during pregnancy (pre-natal), during birth, or through breast-feeding. By following recommendations of a doctor and beginning special therapy early, however, an HIV-positive woman can give birth to a healthy child.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and World Health Organization, "AIDS Epidemic Update: December 2005," December 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Russian Federal AIDS Center, 2006

<sup>3</sup> Federal Service of the Russian Federation for Surveillance in Consumer Rights Protection and Human Welfare, "Fact sheet about the situation of HIV-infection in the Russian Federation," January 24, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Results of a national poll by the Public Opinion Fund for Transatlantic Partners Against AIDS and the Russian Media Partnership Against HIV/AIDS, July 4-19, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> World Bank, "Economic consequences of the HIV epidemic in Russia," May 2002.